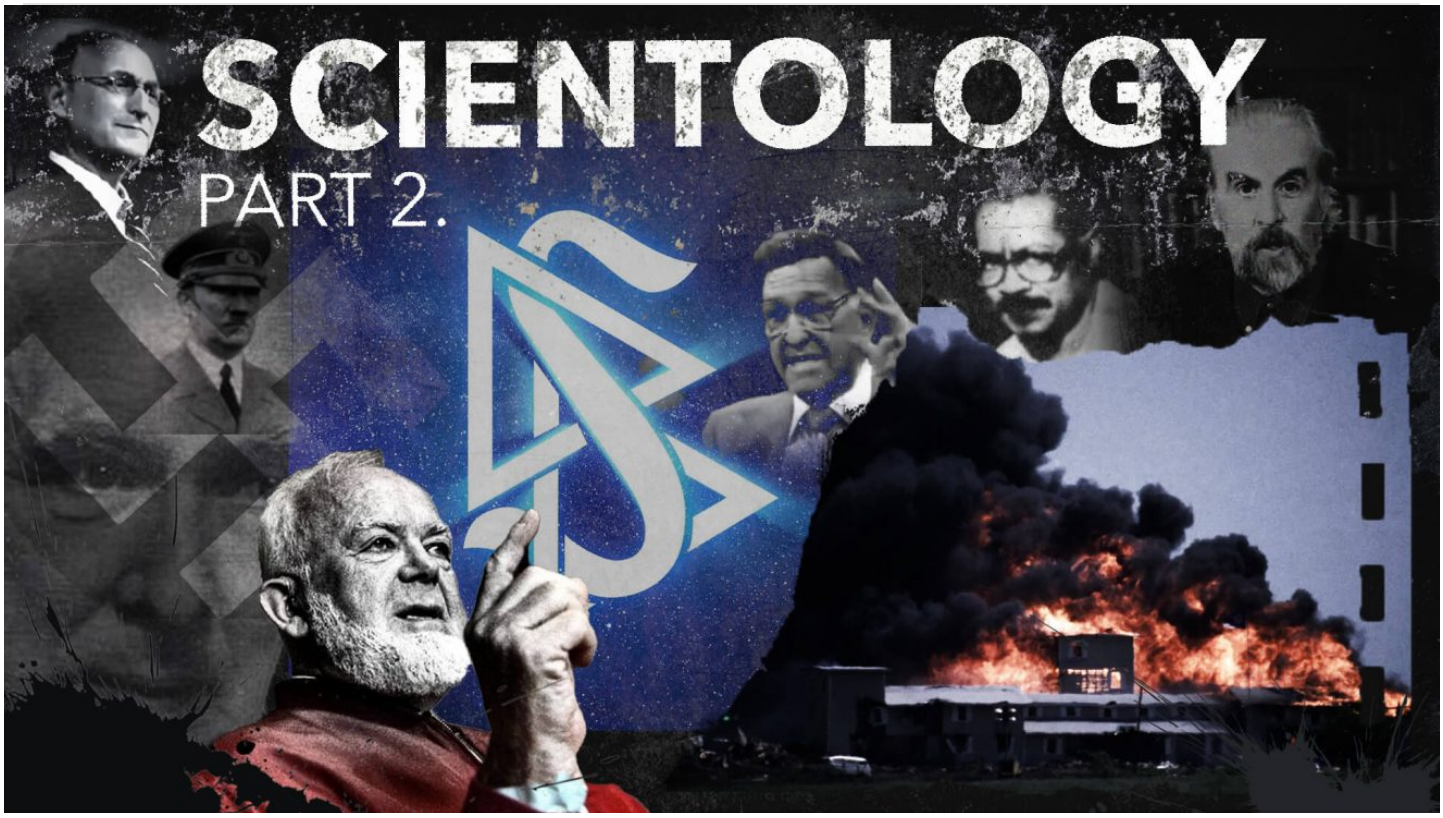


ARTICLES

Scientology: A Thorn in the Side of Anticultism. Part 2

December 31, 2024 · 18 mins read

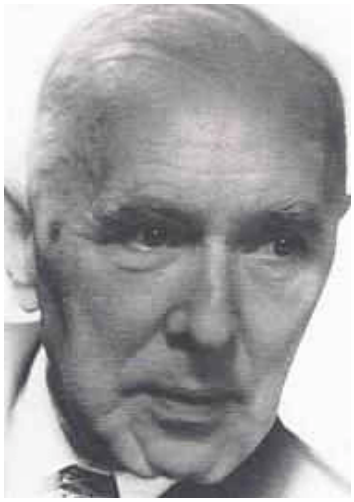
In the first part of the article, we discussed the Church of Scientology, its contributions to strengthening civil rights in society, and its advocacy for religious freedom. We also covered "*The Russian Textbook on Psychopolitics*" published by L. Ron Hubbard as a warning to Americans about an impending threat: the internal erosion of democracy in the United States. Additionally, we highlighted the failure of the anticult movement to establish concentration camps in Alaska and the connections between American anticultists and Nazi psychiatrists involved in the *T4*

Program, who were never held accountable for their crimes. You can read the first part here.

Nazi Anticult Continuity

In our earlier publications, we repeatedly explored the Nazi roots of anticultism. You can find more details in the article Anti-Cultism During the Rise of Fascist Germany. Here, we will briefly review the key points related to Scientology.

Modern anticult organizations, which focus on combating so-called "sects" and "cults" were modeled after the Nazi Apologetic Center, employing similar methods and ideologies, albeit adapted to contemporary conditions.



Nazi Pastor Walter Künneth (1901–1997)

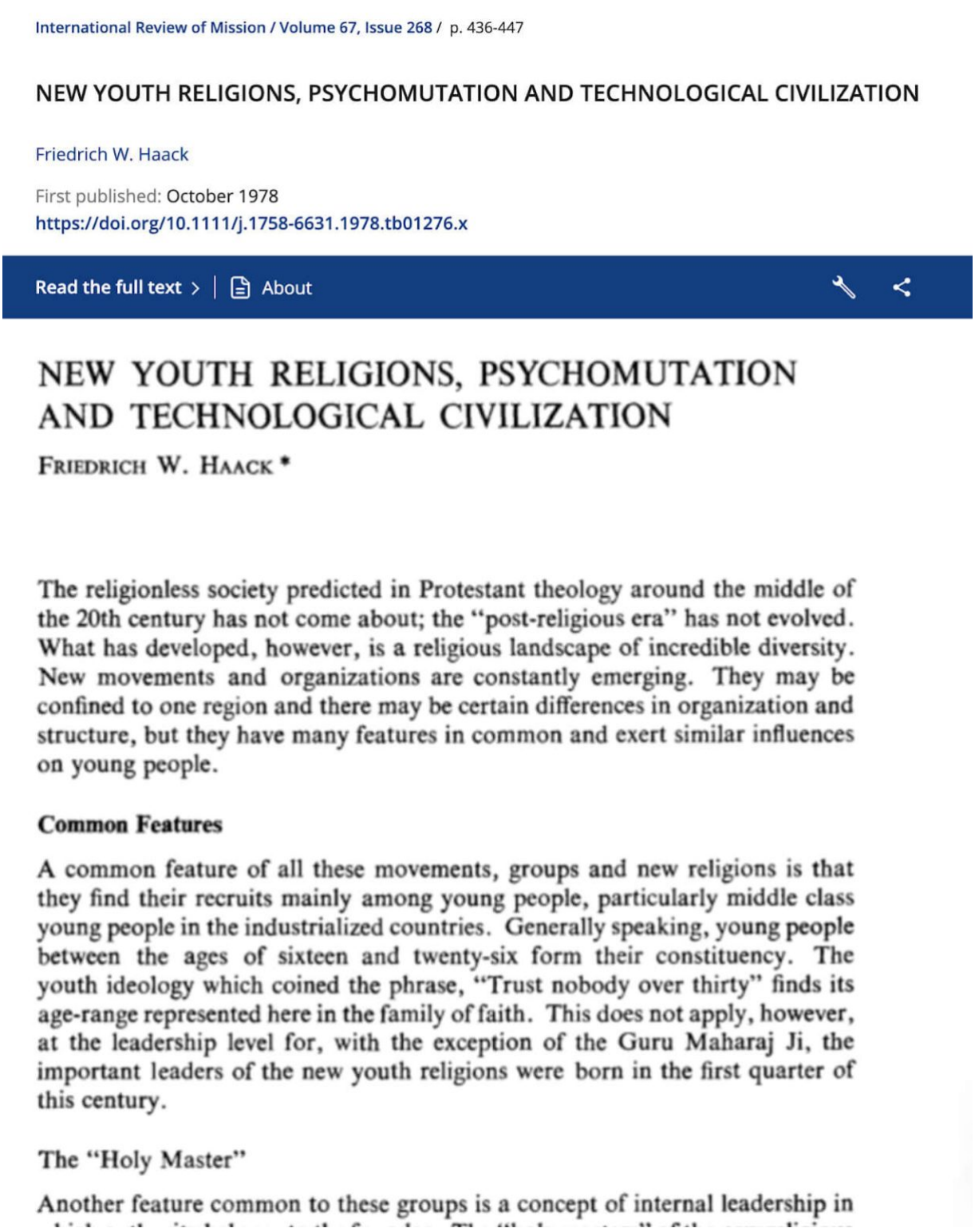
In 1921, the Protestant Church in Germany established the Apologetic Center—a prototype of today's anticult organizations. It was headed by pastor Walter Künneth (1901–1997), known for his antisemitic views. From the outset, Künneth actively campaigned against "non-Christian movements," laying the groundwork for the ideology of anticult organizations.

In 1932, the Apologetic Center published a handbook titled "Freethinking and the Church," aimed at combating non-Christian movements and dissident organizations. Pastor Walter Künneth noted that the **Gestapo showed significant interest in the center's archives on sects and expressed a desire to collaborate with the Apologetic Center** in fighting free thought and Marxism. This marked the beginning of an exchange of materials between the Gestapo and the Apologetic Center.

After the defeat of Nazism, the international community established the United Nations to maintain and strengthen global peace and protect human rights. However, despite all international laws, in 1964, the Protestant Church

in Germany officially reinstated the church office of Commissioner for Sects and Faith within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria. Pastor Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack (1935–1991) was appointed to this role. Haack studied Protestant theology in Bavaria at the University of Nuremberg, during the same period when Pastor Walter Künneth was a professor in the Protestant Theology Department at that university.

In his 1978 book **"New Youth Religions, Psychomutation and Technological Civilization"** [1], Haack examines the influence of new religious movements, often youth-oriented, and analyzes how these movements merge religious ideas with **psychedelic experiences and altered states of consciousness**. The author also addresses the **cultural transformations driven by technological advancements and their impact on traditional religions**, psychology, and society.



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NEW YOUTH RELIGIONS, PSYCHOMUTATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION

Friedrich W. Haack

First published: October 1978
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.1978.tb01276.x

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NEW YOUTH RELIGIONS, PSYCHOMUTATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION

FRIEDRICH W. HAACK *

The religionless society predicted in Protestant theology around the middle of the 20th century has not come about; the "post-religious era" has not evolved. What has developed, however, is a religious landscape of incredible diversity. New movements and organizations are constantly emerging. They may be confined to one region and there may be certain differences in organization and structure, but they have many features in common and exert similar influences on young people.

Common Features

A common feature of all these movements, groups and new religions is that they find their recruits mainly among young people, particularly middle class young people in the industrialized countries. Generally speaking, young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-six form their constituency. The youth ideology which coined the phrase, "Trust nobody over thirty" finds its age-range represented here in the family of faith. This does not apply, however, at the leadership level for, with the exception of the Guru Maharaj Ji, the important leaders of the new youth religions were born in the first quarter of this century.

The "Holy Master"

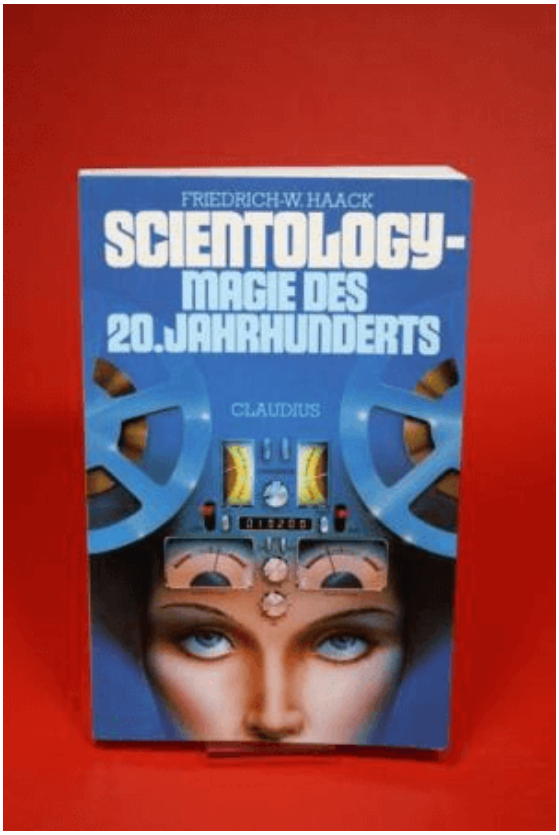
Another feature common to these groups is a concept of internal leadership in

Screenshot from the website onlinelibrary.wiley.com

Haack's book "Scientology – Magic of the 20th century" was published in 1982. In this work, he publicly dehumanizes members of the Church of Scientology, branding them with the following statement:

"Over ten years of research and hundreds of interviews have shown me a

bottemless pit of delusion, hate and will-power. Organizations like scientology are a real danger for human society" 2.



Haack's book "Scientology – Magic of the 20th century"

Since 1985, Haack, a figure who carried on the Nazi legacy of Künneth, served

as the international research director for the American Family Foundation (AFF) in the United States. Thanks to this influential position, Haack wove an extensive anticult network of information and deprogramming centers across Germany, Western Europe, and the United States, infusing them with his Nazi ideology. He held significant authority among other Western anticultists and became a key figure in the international anticult movement.

Haack maintained a close friendship and collaboration with anticultist Johannes Aagaard (1928–2007), the founder of the Danish Dialogue Center at Aarhus University. Haack supported the establishment of the Dialogue Center in 1973 and became its vice president. Despite the name "Dialogue," the term served merely as a facade for advancing ideas against so-called "totalitarian sects." **Haack publicly criticized the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, calling it a neurosis and claiming it contradicted human nature.** In 1981, Haack and Aagaard founded the International Dialogue Center, with offices established in Greece, England, India, Ireland, Germany, and Russia. In all these countries, we'll observe a pattern of opposition to Scientology.

Haack and Aagaard had followers who carried on their work. Among them were prominent European anticultists such as Thomas Gandow, a Lutheran pastor in Germany and a deprogrammer, who also represented the Dialogue Center in Germany. Gandow participated in anticult conferences in Russia during the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. Another key figure in the European anticult movement was Jacques Richard, honorary president of the European Federation of Centers for Research and Information on Sectarianism (FECRIS), the leading anticult organization in Europe. However, one of the most notable disciples of Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack and Johannes Aagaard was Alexander Dvorkin from Russia.

1 – Thomas Gandow, 2 – Alexander Dvorkin, 3- Gerald Armstrong (a defector from the Church of Scientology), International Scientific-Practical Conference “Totalitarian Sects – Threat of the 21st Century”, April 23–25, 2001, Russia, Nizhny Novgorod

Johannes Aagaard. International Scientific-Practical Conference “Totalitarian Sects – Threat of the 21st Century”. April 23–25, 2001, Russia, Nizhny Novgorod

Thus, **the direct transmission of knowledge and methods among anticultists has never been interrupted**, maintaining continuity from the era

of the Third Reich to the present day.

Given the active efforts of Scientology representatives to expose Nazi methods in psychiatry, it is not surprising that anticultists in the United States, Germany, and other countries have orchestrated a campaign of harassment and persecution against them.

The Anticult Movement in the U.S.

A discussion of the situation surrounding new religious movements (NRMs) would be incomplete without mentioning the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This amendment **granted equal rights to all religious movements, both old and new, and prohibited discrimination** and significantly complicated the efforts of anticultists. [3] Unlike in Europe after World War II, where religious apologetic anticult organizations could appeal to authorities to intervene in the activities of NRMs under the guise of a dominant religion, such actions were not possible in the U.S. Thus, American anticultists adopted a different strategy in their battle against NRMs, which they branded as "cults."

To justify their destructive activities against NRMs, American anticultists needed to attract public attention and gain societal approval. This explains the large number of books, articles, and TV shows produced in the U.S. targeting NRMs. We will discuss this in greater detail later.

It cannot be said that there was no opposition from religious apologetic organizations in the United States. In 1960, the first anticult organization, the **Christian Research Institute (CRI)**, was established. Its founder, Walter Martin (1928–1989), like his German counterpart Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack, was a Protestant apologist and theologian known for his research and criticism of sects and cults. In the same year, Martin authored "The Kingdom of the Cults," a book analyzing various religious movements, including Scientology. [4] This work became highly cited and served as a foundational resource for many anticultists.

Walter Martin

However, **in the United States, the primary focus was placed on collaboration with psychologists and psychiatrists** and promoting the theory of "brainwashing," which has been repeatedly debunked as unscientific.

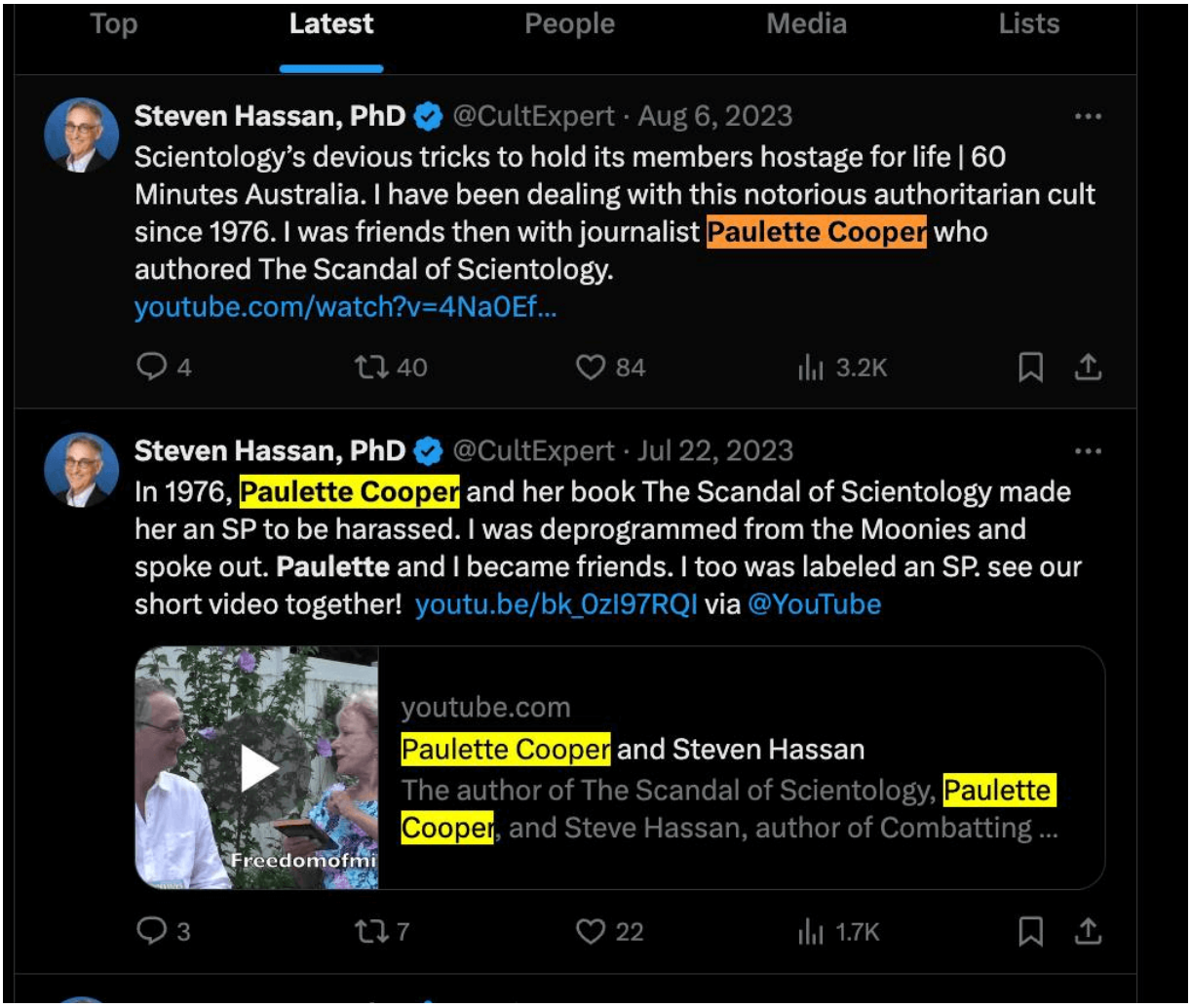
One of the well-known American psychiatrists and anticultists was John Gordon Clark (1926–1999). He is recognized for his research on the impact of cults on mental health. Clark founded the Center on Destructive Cultism. He earned his Doctor of Medicine degree from Harvard Medical School and worked at Harvard University.

At the same Harvard University, Paulette Cooper, a journalist, studied **comparative religion**. In 1971, she published the book "The Scandal of Scientology." Before releasing the book, Cooper worked as a freelance journalist, writing articles on various topics and selling them to well-known glossy magazines. Scientology became the subject that brought her widespread fame. Her book created a massive stir in the media and society. It remains Cooper's most popular and influential work throughout her career.

Not long ago, on his social media page on X, Steven Hassan proudly stated that he had been friends with Cooper since the early stages of his controversial

activities [5]. It should be noted that Steven Hassan has been repeatedly involved in scandals related to forcible deprogramming connected to CAN—the Cult Awareness Network.

Steven Hassan and Paulette Cooper, a journalist who published the book “The Scandal of Scientology” in 1971. [5]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Steven Hassan, PhD @CultExpert · Aug 6, 2023
Scientology's devious tricks to hold its members hostage for life | 60 Minutes Australia. I have been dealing with this notorious authoritarian cult since 1976. I was friends then with journalist Paulette Cooper who authored The Scandal of Scientology.
youtube.com/watch?v=4NaOEf...
4
40
84
3.2K
Steven Hassan, PhD @CultExpert · Jul 22, 2023
In 1976, Paulette Cooper and her book The Scandal of Scientology made her an SP to be harassed. I was deprogrammed from the Moonies and spoke out. Paulette and I became friends. I too was labeled an SP. see our short video together! youtu.be/bk_0zI97RQI via @YouTube
Freedomofmi
youtube.com
Paulette Cooper and Steven Hassan
The author of The Scandal of Scientology, Paulette Cooper, and Steve Hassan, author of Combatting ...
3
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Screenshot from the Steven Hassan's X page [6]

Steven Hassan and Paulette Cooper, a journalist who published the book "The Scandal of Scientology" in 1971. [5]

For about 15 years, the Church of Scientology fought to defend its reputation in court against the author of "The Scandal of Scientology." In the end, Cooper was forced to transfer the rights to her book to the Church of Scientology.

In 1978, John Clark, along with his colleague Robert J. Lifton from Yale University, participated in a seminar on NRMs held in Hanover by the German Association for Child Psychiatry [3]. Once again, traces of Nazi influence can be observed here, which will be discussed in more detail later.

It is worth noting that Robert J. Lifton coined the term "thought reform," and his work on this topic has been used as the gospel of "mind control" ideology

of the North American anticult movement.

Some members of the German Association for Child Psychiatry who attended the seminar were accused of being **active pro-euthanasia psychiatrists in the Nazi movement during World War Two: Dr. H. A. Schmitz, Dr. Buger Prinz, Dr. Hildegard Jetzer, and Dr. Franz Kapp** [3].

For example, Schmitz prepared psychiatric evaluations "before special courts and people's courts" and was one of the experts in the Nazi program known as "T4" for "purifying" the Aryan race of "inferior" citizens [7]. Schmitz argued that a key task of child psychiatrists was "to determine the hereditary value of the person concerned" and emphasized the need for "**early identification of future habitual criminals**." After the war, Schmitz became an honorary member of the German Association for Child Psychiatry and remained so until 2001.

Hildegard Jätzer is alleged to have ordered the extermination of more than 2,000 Polish children in concentration camps, while Dr. Franz Kapp, in 1939, authored an article titled "On the Sterilization of Hereditary Mentally Deficients and Its Meaning in the Fight Against Criminality."

In 1979, John Clark published an article titled "Cults" in the "Journal of the American Medical Association," where he examined the impact of cults on mental health and offered recommendations for professionals in psychiatry. In the article, he wrote: "**The new youth cults,** though usually self-styled as religious for purposes of First Amendment privileges, **are increasingly dangerous to the health of their converts and menacing to their critics.**" This was a direct reference to the Church of Scientology, which for years made significant efforts to push back against critics and the defamation they spread.

In 1976, the church's spokesperson, Arthur Maren, stated, "We are not a turn-the-other-cheek religion" [8]. Often, its defense strategies included private investigators working for its lawyers [9]. It is worth noting that the use of private investigators is a common practice in the legal profession.

In 1981, Clark joined the board of directors of the American Family Foundation (AFF), which had been established in 1979. The board of AFF largely consisted of psychiatrists and psychologists who supported the unscientific theory of "brainwashing." The organization's goal was to impose this "theory" on parents whose children had joined new religious movements and to involve them in fighting "cults" – literally, in fighting their own children.

It was here that Clark continued his active anticult efforts alongside Michael D. Langone. In the 1980s, Clark was frequently sought out by the media, families, and psychiatrists for his alleged expertise on the influence of "cults" [10].
Let us recall that in 1985, Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack, a successor to the Nazi ideas of Walter Künneth, also joined AFF. Among the most prominent members of the AFF board of directors were psychiatrist Louis Jolyon West and psychologist Margaret Singer, who will be discussed in more detail later.

List of directors (psychologists and psychiatrists highlighted)

Board of Directors (AFF)

Herbert L. Rosedale	President; Senior Partner, Parker Chapin Flattau & Klimpl, New York, New York
Arthur A. Dole	Ph.D.; Professor Emeritus, Psychology in Education Division, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania
Carol Giambalvo	Exit Counselor, Author Exit Counseling: A Family Intervention and The Boston Movement: Critical Perspectives on the International Churches of Christ
David A. Halperin	M.D.; Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, New York
John Hochman	M.D.; Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, UCLA Medical School, Los Angeles, California
Edward A. Lottick	M.D.; Family physician, Kingston, Pennsylvania; also an advisor for FACTNet
Margaret Thaler Singer	Ph.D.; Emeritus Adjunct Professor of Psychology, University of California, Berkeley; Clinical Psychologist, Berkeley, California; also advisor for FACTNet

AFF Directors Emeriti's (AFF)

Kay H. Barney	International program manager, Raytheon Company, retired, Lexington, Massachusetts

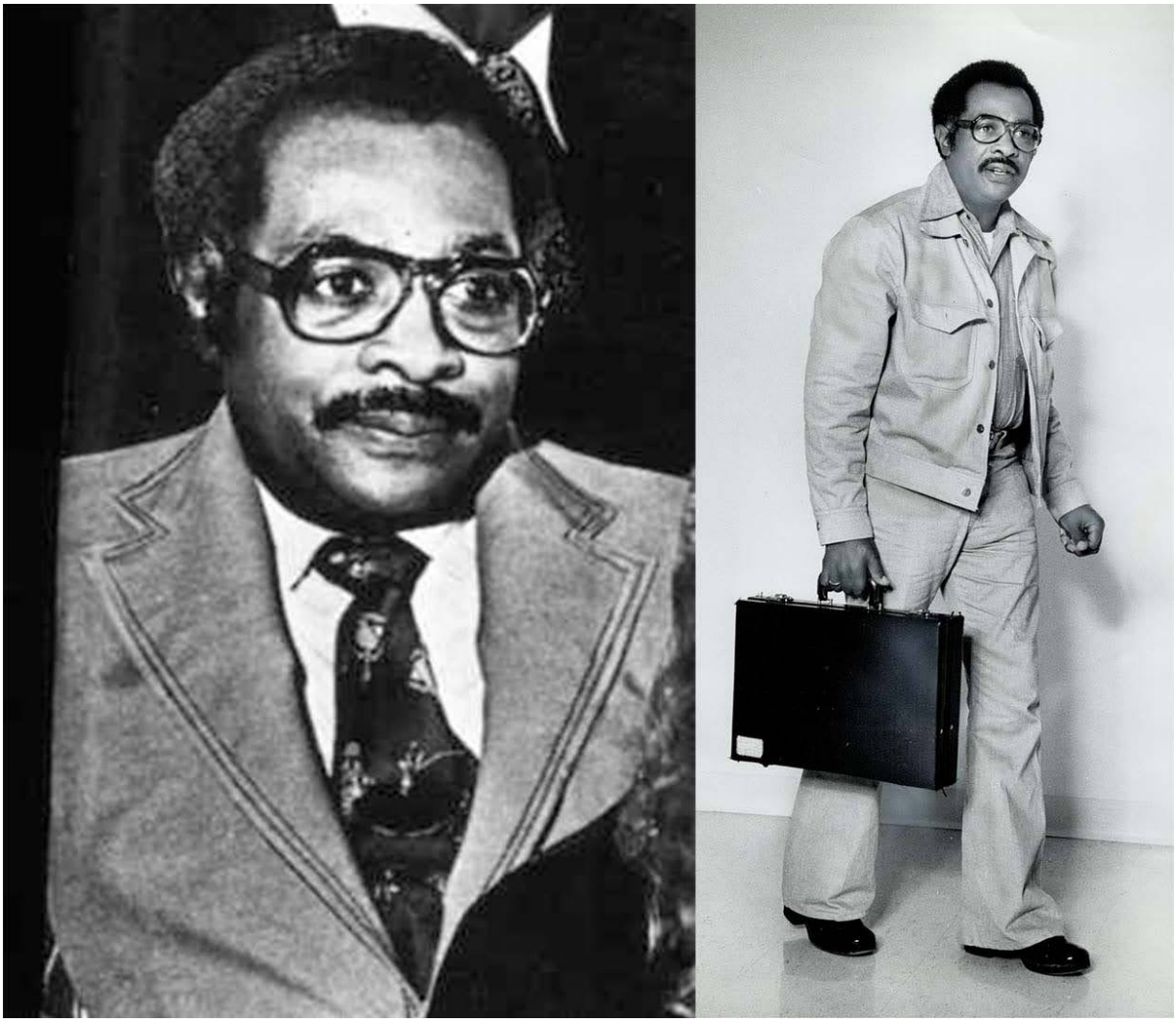
Barney	Massachusetts
John G. Clark	M.D.; Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, retired, Weston, Massachusetts
Guy B. Ford	Business executive, retired, Marblehead, Massachusetts

According to the New York Times, “The Church of Scientology objected strongly to Dr. Clark’s assertions, and the church and Dr. Clark battled in court. Dr. Clark said the church had engaged in a campaign of harassment against him. In 1988, he settled with the church, received an undisclosed amount of money but agreed never to discuss the group publicly again” [10].

The Citizens Freedom Foundation (CFF), an organization founded in 1984, was also actively operating in the United States. Shortly afterward, it was transformed into the Cult Awareness Network (CAN). Its founder, deprogrammer and criminal Ted Patrick, was repeatedly convicted of kidnapping, abuse, and sexual assault.

AFF and CFF regularly organized and participated in international conferences to coordinate the actions of anticultists worldwide.

The Fight Against Deprogrammers

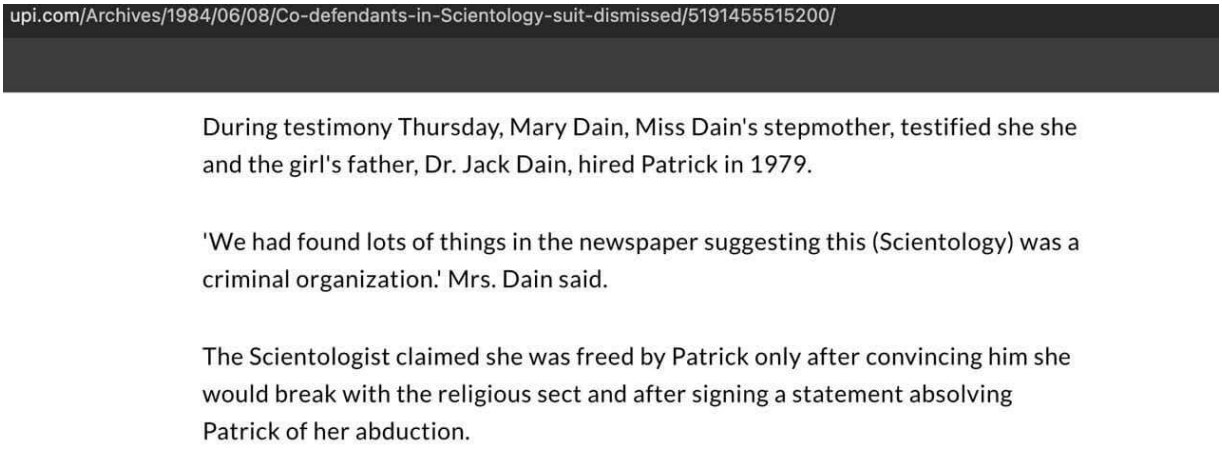


Deprogrammer and criminal Ted Patrick

In 1984, 29-year-old Scientologist Paula Dain filed a lawsuit against Ted Patrick and three of his accomplices, claiming they kidnapped her, subjected her to 38 days of deprogramming, and released her only after forcing her to renounce the church and absolve Patrick of responsibility for the abduction [11]. The other three defendants were Canadian deprogrammer Nan McLean, Los Angeles attorney Richard Akemon, and freelance writer Paulette Cooper, the author of the book *The Scandal of Scientology*.

During testimony, Mary Dain, Ms. Dain's stepmother, stated that she and the girl's father, Dr. Jack Dain, hired Patrick in 1979.

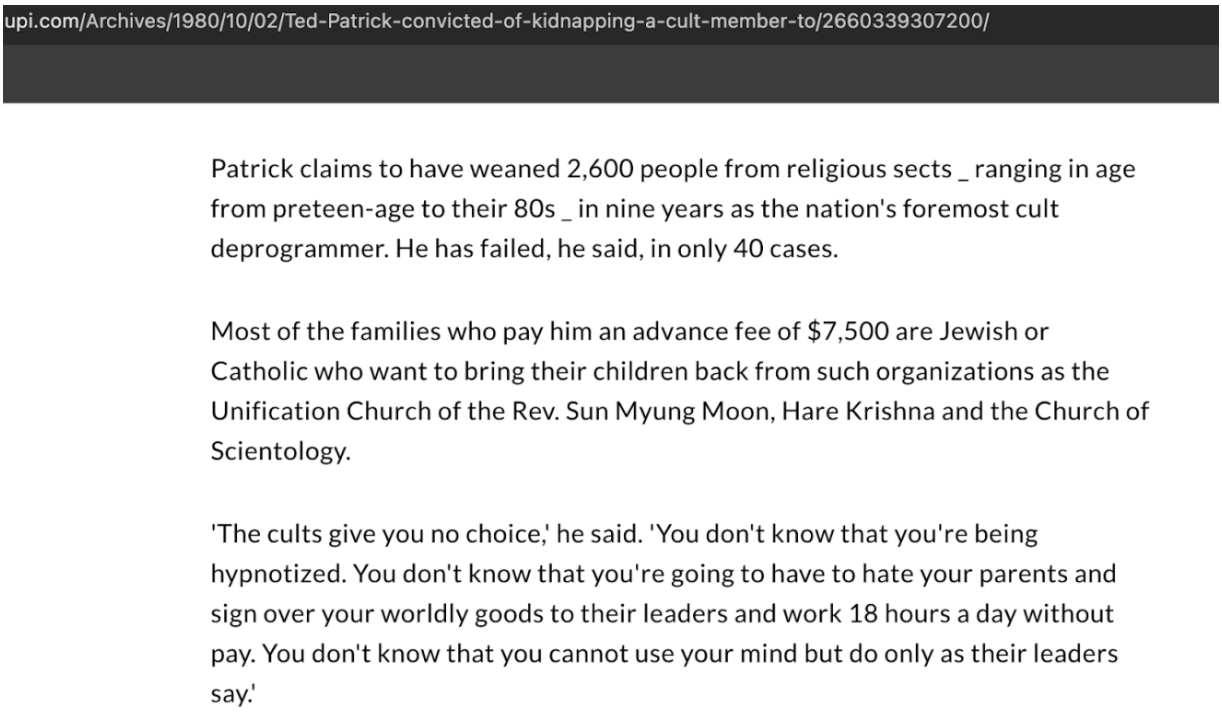
"**We had found lots of things in the newspaper suggesting this (Scientology) was a criminal organization,**" Mrs. Dain said [12].


upi.com/Archives/1984/06/08/Co-defendants-in-Scientology-suit-dismissed/5191455515200/
During testimony Thursday, Mary Dain, Miss Dain's stepmother, testified she she and the girl's father, Dr. Jack Dain, hired Patrick in 1979.
'We had found lots of things in the newspaper suggesting this (Scientology) was a criminal organization.' Mrs. Dain said.
The Scientologist claimed she was freed by Patrick only after convincing him she would break with the religious sect and after signing a statement absolving Patrick of her abduction.

Screenshot from the UPI website archive June 8, 1984

In other words, the girl's parents came across defamatory material actively spread by anticultists.

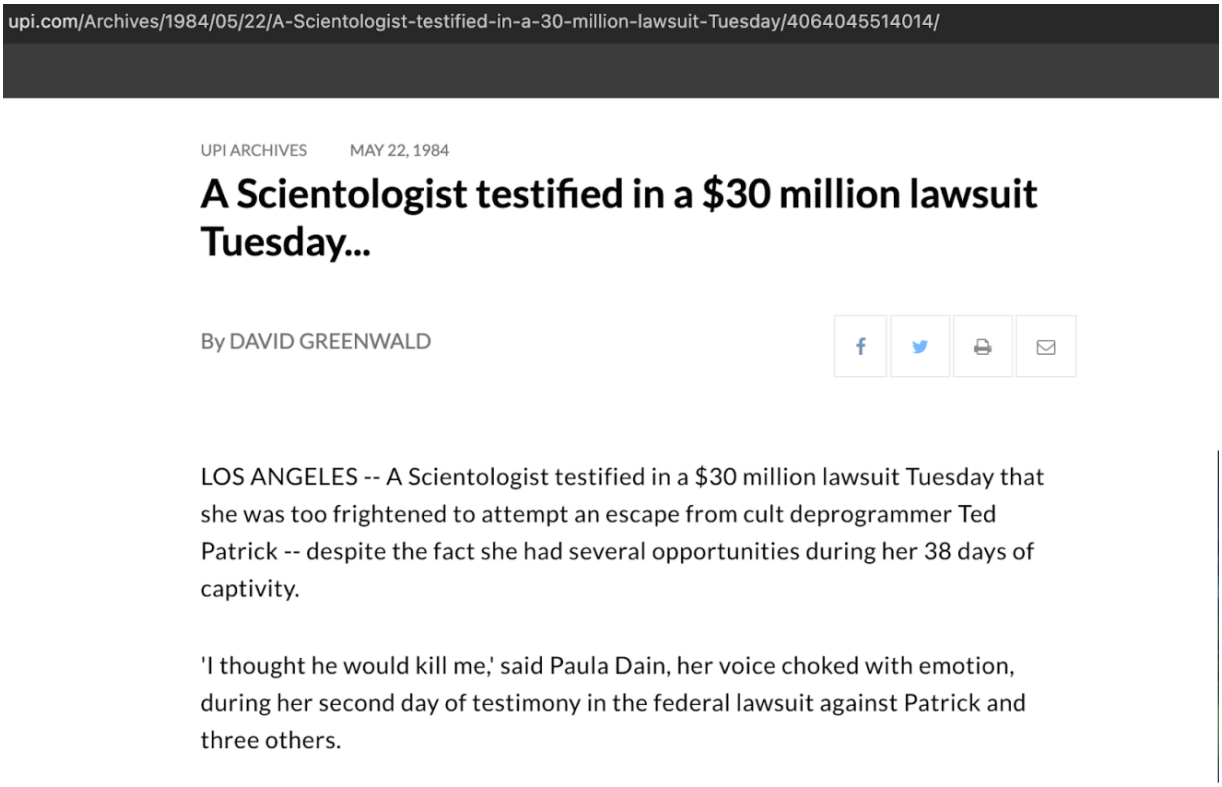
Patrick claimed to have separated 2,600 people from religious cults, ranging in age from preteens to 80-year-olds, over nine years as the country's leading cult deprogrammer [13].


upi.com/Archives/1980/10/02/Ted-Patrick-convicted-of-kidnapping-a-cult-member-to/2660339307200/
Patrick claims to have weaned 2,600 people from religious sects _ ranging in age from preteen-age to their 80s _ in nine years as the nation's foremost cult deprogrammer. He has failed, he said, in only 40 cases.
Most of the families who pay him an advance fee of $7,500 are Jewish or Catholic who want to bring their children back from such organizations as the Unification Church of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, Hare Krishna and the Church of Scientology.
'The cults give you no choice,' he said. 'You don't know that you're being hypnotized. You don't know that you're going to have to hate your parents and sign over your worldly goods to their leaders and work 18 hours a day without pay. You don't know that you cannot use your mind but do only as their leaders say.'

Screenshot from the UPI website archive Oct. 2, 1980

Patrick told Paula, "I don't care if this takes four hours, four days, four weeks, four months or four years, you're going to stay here," Paula Dain testified [14].

He called her a “mindless robot, zombie and a vegetable.” “I thought he would kill me,” Paula Dain said, her voice trembling with emotion during her second day of testimony [14].


upi.com/Archives/1984/05/22/A-Scientologist-testified-in-a-30-million-lawsuit-Tuesday/4064045514014/

UPI ARCHIVES MAY 22, 1984

A Scientologist testified in a $30 million lawsuit Tuesday...

By DAVID GREENWALD

LOS ANGELES -- A Scientologist testified in a $30 million lawsuit Tuesday that she was too frightened to attempt an escape from cult deprogrammer Ted Patrick -- despite the fact she had several opportunities during her 38 days of captivity.

'I thought he would kill me,' said Paula Dain, her voice choked with emotion, during her second day of testimony in the federal lawsuit against Patrick and three others.

Screenshot from the UPI website archive dated May 22, 1984

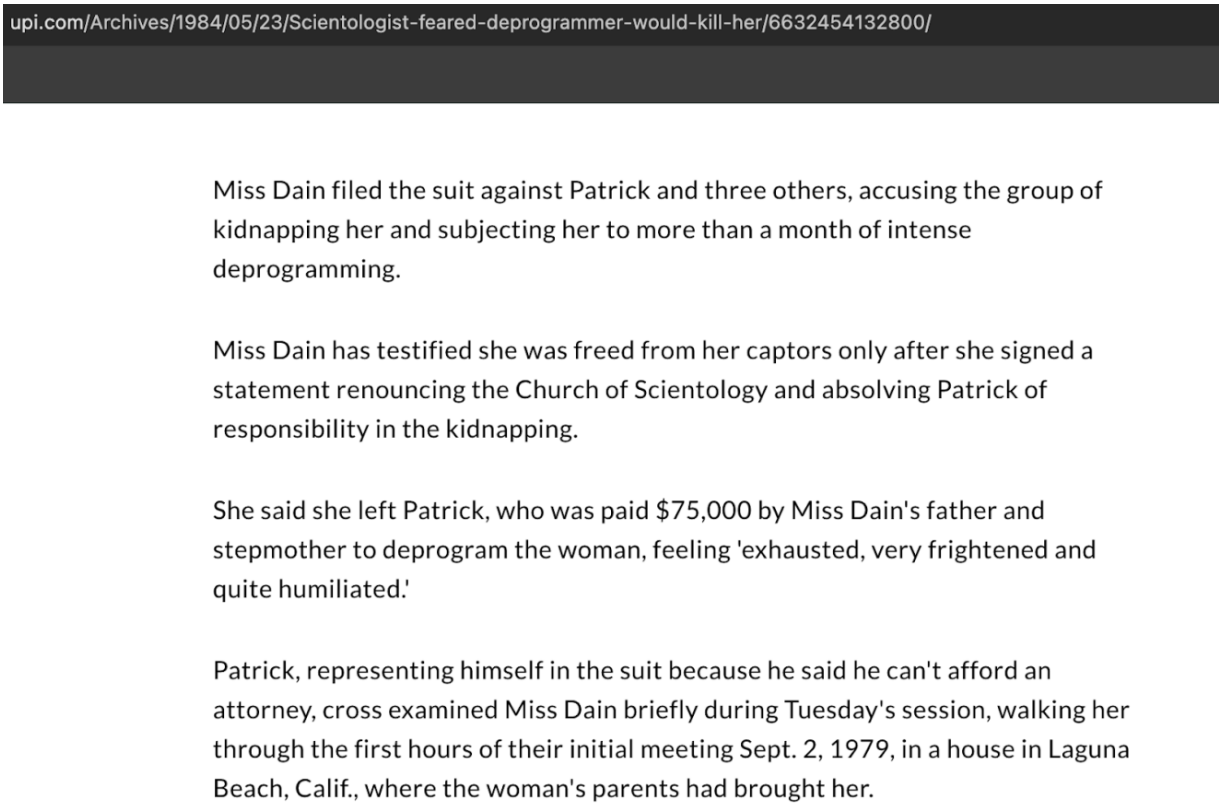
Ms. Dain stated that she renounced her commitment to Scientology only to convince Patrick to release her. She described herself as “exhausted, very frightened, and quite humiliated” by the deprogramming attempt.

After Scientologist Paula Dain won her case against Ted Patrick in court, she filed another lawsuit, this time against Paulette Cooper. Her attorney, Don Randolph, stated that Cooper harassed another defendant in Dain’s case, Canadian deprogramming specialist Nan McLean, to prevent her from testifying during the investigation of Patrick for Dain’s abduction [15]. Cooper allegedly told McLean that her reputation in the deprogramming community would be ruined if she testified against Ted Patrick and that she would be denied legal defense funding **provided by an anti-Scientology group.**

It’s worth noting that in 1985, Paulette Cooper herself eventually settled with

Scientology: she signed an out-of-court agreement and transferred the rights to her book, “The Scandal of Scientology” [16]. For the next 30 years, until 2015, Cooper did not revisit the subject.

This wasn’t the first or last criminal case involving Ted Patrick. He was obsessed with deprogramming, which, moreover, was quite lucrative—the “standard, three-day deprogramming fee” was $7,500 [17]. Paula Dain’s parents paid Patrick $75,000 for the deprogramming of their daughter [18].


upi.com/Archives/1984/05/23/Scientologist-feared-deprogrammer-would-kill-her/6632454132800/
Miss Dain filed the suit against Patrick and three others, accusing the group of kidnapping her and subjecting her to more than a month of intense deprogramming.
Miss Dain has testified she was freed from her captors only after she signed a statement renouncing the Church of Scientology and absolving Patrick of responsibility in the kidnapping.
She said she left Patrick, who was paid $75,000 by Miss Dain's father and stepmother to deprogram the woman, feeling 'exhausted, very frightened and quite humiliated.'
Patrick, representing himself in the suit because he said he can't afford an attorney, cross examined Miss Dain briefly during Tuesday's session, walking her through the first hours of their initial meeting Sept. 2, 1979, in a house in Laguna Beach, Calif., where the woman's parents had brought her.

Screenshot from the UPI website archive dated May 23, 1984

From the above, it can be concluded that deprogramming was a profitable business that not only served the global agenda of anticultists but also allowed to make a career of now famous deprogrammers, who are in fact criminals with manic tendencies.

The Case of CAN

In 1984, the Citizens Freedom Foundation (CFF) was transformed into the Cult Awareness Network (CAN) [27]. One of CAN’s primary methods was the so-called

“deprogramming”—a coercive process of forcibly removing individuals from religious organizations. CAN employed physical and psychological pressure, keeping individuals against their will, which often escalated into abusive practices that violated their rights [19,20]. More details on this can be found in this article.

Deprogrammers associated with CAN included Steven Hassan, Carol Giambalvo, Rick Ross, Ted Patrick, Galen Kelly, David Clark, Donald Moore, and Robert Point. These were individuals for whom violence against other people was not something unacceptable, immoral or illegal. Their actions left thousands of lives trampled and scarred.

Scientology had long regarded CAN as an opponent of religious freedom and a hate group [21]. Church representatives claimed that the network used “deprogrammers” to abduct individuals in attempts to persuade them to leave small religious groups. The case of Paula Dain was far from the only one involving deprogrammers during those years.

In 1991, a group of Scientologists attempted to attend a CAN conference by submitting their applications, but they were denied entry. In 1992, Scientologists filed between 40 and 50 lawsuits against CAN and its officials, alleging discrimination for refusing to allow them to attend the conferences. Some of the Scientologists won their cases in court [22].

Their attorney Kendrick Moxon, who represented many Scientologists, stated that the lawsuits aimed to combat discrimination within CAN against people **who wanted to reform it**.

“There appears to be a concerted effort by the Church of Scientology to litigate CAN to death,” said Cynthia Kisser, CAN’s executive director. “It’s has become a terrible situation for us” [23].

Cynthia Kisser. Screenshot from The Cult Awareness Network TV program – CBS 60 Minutes – December 28, 1997

A significant blow to CAN came with the case of Jason Scott, a member of the Pentecostal church, who was subjected to an attempted deprogramming orchestrated by CAN.

Jason Scott. Screenshot from The Cult Awareness Network TV program – CBS 60 Minutes – December 28, 1997

He filed a lawsuit and won a landmark case, resulting in the organization being ordered to pay over $1 million in damages [24]. His attorney, Kendrick Moxon, a lawyer for the Church of Scientology, represented him in court. This case became a catalyst for a series of lawsuits against CAN, ultimately leading to its financial collapse in 1996 [25]. The organization was unable to cover the costs of its legal defense, having spent over $2 million.

Kendrick Moxon. Screenshot from The Cult Awareness Network TV program – CBS 60 Minutes – December 28, 1997

A sworn statement by Dr. Lowell D. Streiker, a consultant on exiting nontraditional religions, provides several examples of organized CAN deprogrammings he personally knew about. His conclusion: "I've become very disgusted with CAN, having personally had to clean up the wreckage that was left by their deprogrammers which went sour over the years. Seven **highly distraught and depressed deprogramming victims** have [even] been referred to me by various CAN members." [26] Another sworn statement comes from deprogrammer Mark Bloxom. [28]

"Many of us working in deprogramming," Bloxom stated, "frequently attended CFF/CAN conferences and conventions, both regional and national. At these gatherings, we networked with parents and other participants to recruit clients for deprogramming or at least make our work known in anticult circles. Many of us involved in deprogramming were actually guest speakers or participated in discussion groups about deprogramming. I was a speaker on

‘exit counseling’ at the 1985 CAN convention. This was a play on words since **it was well-known that most of my deprogrammings were involuntary.** Kisser never took any steps to discourage me from continuing abduction-style deprogramming. She knew I specialized in this type of deprogramming, and it was implicitly understood that if she referred a case to me, an abduction might — and likely would — occur. I believe CAN maintained a list of recommended deprogrammers, and I was on that list.”

After its bankruptcy, CAN’s assets, including the rights to its name, were sold at auction to attorney Kendrick Moxon, who had ties to the Church of Scientology. This marked an ironic conclusion for CAN, as the organization, which had actively fought Scientology and other NRMs using unlawful methods (such as defamation and “deprogramming”), ended up under the control of individuals it had campaigned against. The new CAN, established by Moxon, began advocating for freedom of religion and defending the rights of religious minorities, including those the original CAN had opposed.

Thus, CAN’s history serves as an example of how an anticult organization, which actively employed brutal methods against NRMs, ultimately collapsed under the weight of its own actions and the lawsuits brought by its opponents.

The organization “New CAN” (also known as the “Foundation for Religious Freedom”) sparked both confusion and controversy among scholars and its critics. Members of the “Old CAN” board characterized it as a front group for the Church of Scientology. Meanwhile, “New CAN” positions itself as a **defender of human rights and freedom of religion.**

The Siege of Waco

The Branch Davidians' Mount Carmel compound outside of Waco burned to the ground in April 1993. Photo: Greg Smith/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images

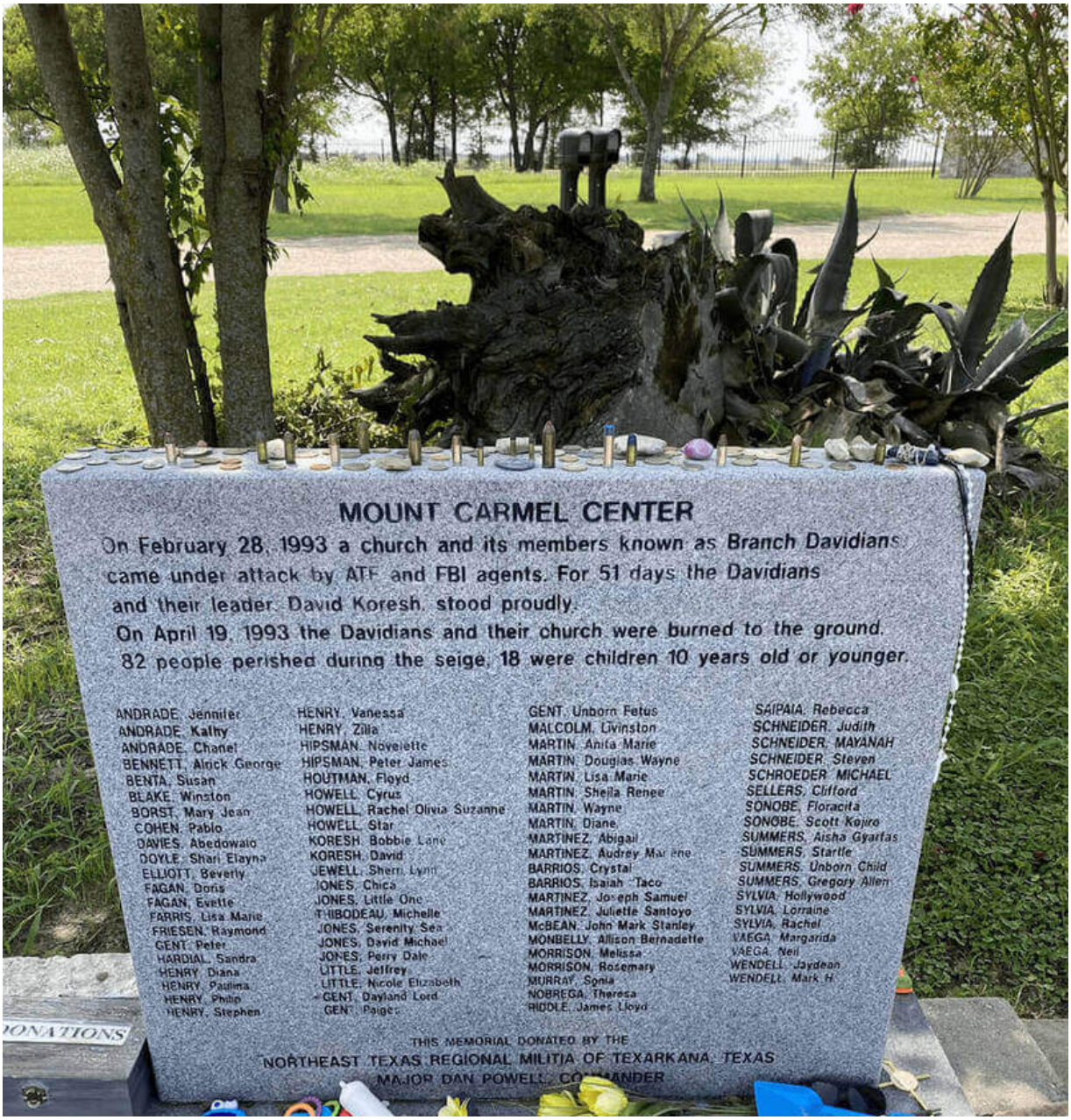
The Cult Awareness Network and the Anticult Movement: Implications for NRMs in America book by Anson Shupe, Susan Darnell, and Kendrick Moxon, a noted attorney for the Church of Scientology) examines the role of the Cult Awareness Network (CAN) and its influence on major events, including the siege at Waco. The book argues that CAN, as a key player in the anticult movement, contributed to escalating tensions around the Davidians by spreading fear about "dangerous cults."

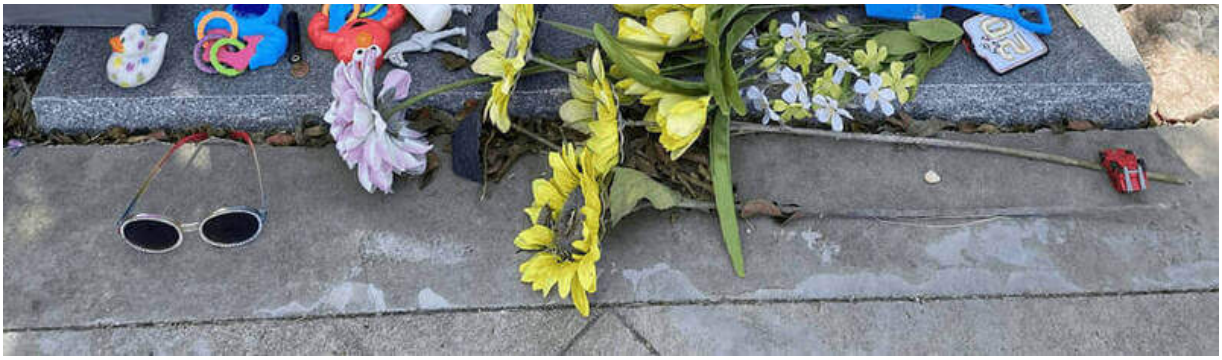
According to the authors, CAN's involvement, along with other anticult groups, influenced public perception and government actions toward new religious movements (NRMs). The book explores how CAN's propaganda and media influence encouraged aggressive government action at Waco, which ultimately led to tragedy. The work critically evaluates the anticult movement for its one-sided portrayal of NRMs, resulting in severe consequences.

The book's critical stance on CAN ties back to Scientology's longstanding opposition to anticult organizations, particularly those that supported "deprogramming" and were hostile to groups like Scientology. The authors also discuss broader social and legal implications of attitudes toward NRMs in

America.

On April 8, 1993, during the siege of the Branch Davidians' compound, CAN president Patricia Ryan stated that the FBI should use any means necessary to apprehend David Koresh, including lethal force. [29] Throughout the siege, CAN representatives provided unofficial consultations to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) and the FBI. They also made numerous media appearances, including statements that, according to the FBI's commanding officer, "may have significantly hindered negotiations." [30] The siege ultimately ended on April 19 with the deaths of 82 people, including 25 children.





In 1996, a joint hearing in the U.S. Congress on the Waco siege, titled "Investigation Into The Activities Of Federal Law Enforcement Agencies Toward The Branch Davidians" took place. During this hearing, publicists from the New Alliance Party distributed a report in Congress and the media titled What is the Cult Awareness Network and What Role Did It Play in Waco? [31]

Here are some excerpts from that report:

"A handful of psychologists, psychiatrists and sociologists, some of whom serve on CAN's board of advisors, provide pseudo-scientific cover for these activities. They give talks at CAN events, write articles, mostly in their own publication, Cultic Studies Journal, and provide quotes to the media when a "cult expert" is needed. Many of these individuals also earn money testifying as "expert witnesses" in kidnapping cases, litigation in which disaffected ex-members are suing their former group or group leaders, and conservatorship cases in which parents are seeking legal and financial control of grown children who have joined so-called "cults."" [31]

L.J. West

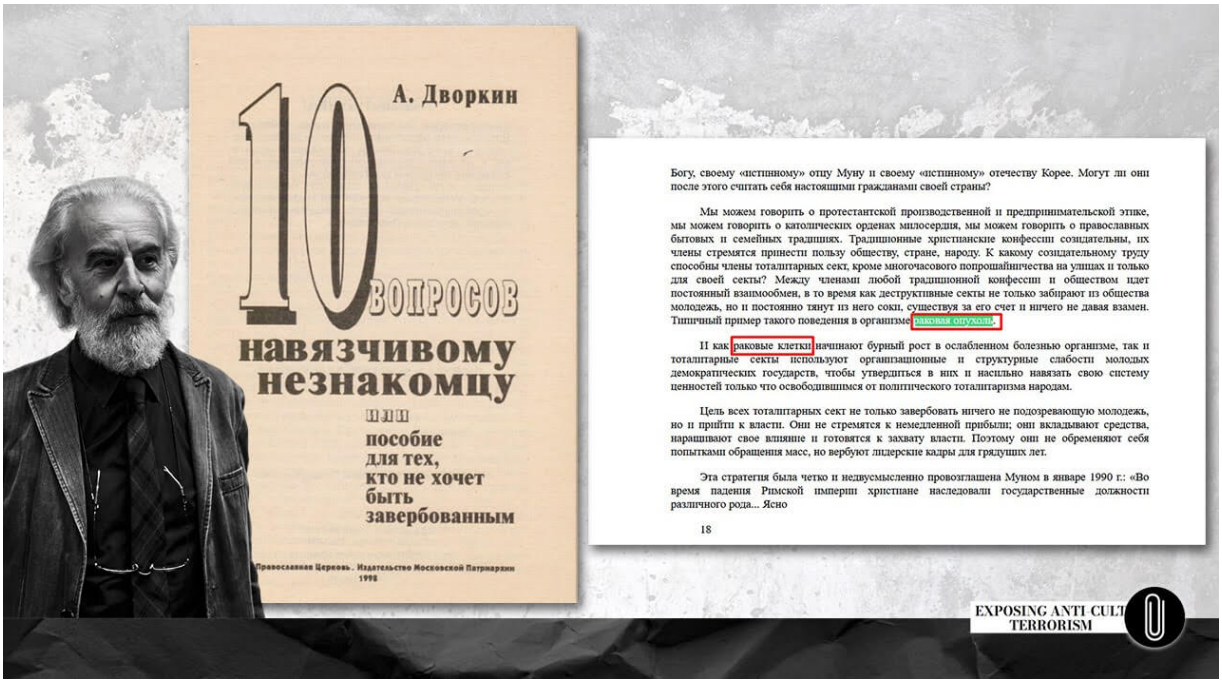
Margaret Singer

"Among these individuals, the two most high-profile are psychiatrist Louis Jolyon "Jolly" West, chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at UCLA's School of Medicine, and Margaret Singer, a clinical psychologist with a private practice in Berkeley, California and a former adjunct professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of California at Berkeley..."

"West currently serves on the advisory board of CAN and a similar group called the American Family Foundation. He has been a keynote speaker at CAN conferences for more than 15 years. In a 1983 speech to a CFF convention,

West called for the development of a "medical model" for the elimination of what he considered "fake" religions: "A good approach if you were interested in curing a cancer is to find a chemical that ***kills the malignant cells*** *and spares those that are healthy. What would be the effect of a device or technique which, when applied by society to any organization calling itself religious, would have no untoward effect upon bona fide religions, but would be deadly to the fakes? ...* ***Malignant cells or fake religions*** *wouldn't survive it. Healthy cells or bona fide religions and altruistic organizations would not be harmed (West, 1983).""*[31]

It is worth noting that terms like **"malignant cells"** and **"cancerous tumor"** were used by Nazis in their dehumanization of Jewish people and have been adopted by modern anticultists, heirs to Nazism. These phrases can be heard in speeches worldwide, including those used by Alexander Dvorkin in his book *10 Questions for an Intrusive Stranger.*



CAN officially declared bankruptcy and closed on June 23, 1996. In November 1996, the organization's assets were sold at auction and acquired by individuals affiliated with the Church of Scientology.

To be continued...

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AFF anticult movement CAN Dialogue Center Scientology Steven Hassan Ted Patrick Walter Martin

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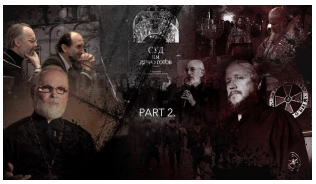

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